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SIAM AND LAOS.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

FOR

MISSION CIRCLES AND BANDS.

BY

MRS. S. R. HOUSE,

WATERFORD, N. Y.

PRICE, FIVE CENTS.

PHILADELPHIA:

WOMAN'S FOREIGN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
OF THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH,

No. 1334 CHESTNUT STREET.

1890.

Women's Board of Foreign Missions
OF THE
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
NEW YORK.
53 Fifth Ave.

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1. *Q.* Where is Siam?

Siam is in Farther India, between Burmah on the west and Anam or Cochin China on the east. It has a population of six millions or more, about the same as the State of New York; and yet it is four times as large. Its capital is Bangkok, a city with four hundred thousand people.

2. *Q.* What is the native name?

The native name is Müang Ti, the country of the free. *Siam* is from a Sanscrit word meaning the *brown* race. The Siamese do not use it, but it very well describes their complexion.

3. *Q.* By what other name is Siam known?

It is often called "The Land of the White Elephant," because the people have great reverence for that animal, and the flag of the country is a white elephant on a red ground.

4. *Q.* How do missionaries generally go to Siam?

They go across the continent by rail to San Francisco, take a steamer from there to Yokohama in Japan, and on to Hong Kong in China. There another steamer takes them down the China Sea, and up the Gulf of Siam to Bangkok, and they are about two months reaching that city.

5. *Q.* In what other way do they sometimes go?

They cross the Atlantic to Liverpool and thence by steamer through the Mediterranean Sea, Suez Canal, Red Sea, and across the Indian Ocean to Singapore, then up the Gulf of Siam to Bangkok. The distance, time and expense are about the same by both routes.

6. *Q.* What is the *climate* of Siam?

Like a perpetual summer, with grass growing, trees in foliage, birds singing and flowers blooming. The missionaries wear as thin clothing in January as in July or August. The houses are built without chimneys, for it is so warm that they do not need a fire except for cooking, which is done in a separate building.

7. *Q.* What are some of the *productions* of Siam?

Sugar cane, pepper, tobacco, indigo and cotton, but rice is the chief product. The Meinam river, like the Nile, annually overflows its banks, thus preparing the land for the cultivation of rice, of which more than five million dollars' worth is exported every year. Rice for the table there is but one and a half cents a pound.

8. *Q.* Name some of the *fruits.*

The cocoa nut, pine apple, banana, orange, guava, mango, and mangusteen, tamarind, and many others unknown in America.

9. *Q.* Name some of the *animals.*

The elephant, tiger and bear, and the rhinoceros are found in the forests. When out in the country in their boats, the missionaries often see scores of

monkeys, with their young, playing on the banks, and thousands of bats hanging by their feet from the branches of the trees. Centipedes, snakes and scorpions often find their way into the houses, besides armies of ants, large and small, black, white and red.

10. *Q.* Is there any such animal as a *white* elephant?

Though Siam is called "the land of the white elephant," there is really no such animal. The lightest is a dull yellowish brown, and is *white* only in contrast with its darker brother.

11. *Q.* How do the Siamese treat the so-called white elephant?

When one is found, the king and his court go a day's journey to meet him, and escort him to the city with great rejoicings. A title of nobility is given him, and a stable for his own use, over the door of which is his title in large letters of gold. Several gold bands are put on each of his tusks, and the rope by which he is fastened to a gilded post is covered with crimson velvet. Bananas, sugar cane, and other dainties are carried to him on silver trays by men creeping on their knees. When sick he is attended by the court physician. The priests wait upon him, sprinkle him with holy water and pray for his recovery. If he dies, there is great mourning, and funeral honors are paid to his remains.

12. *Q.* Are there any crocodiles in Siam?

Yes; they are found in great numbers in the rivers and creeks. In one day's ride up the Meinam

river, a missionary once counted one hundred and seventy, varying in size from three to fifteen feet.

13. *Q.* Tell the story of one.

A Chinese fisherman was wading in the shallow water at the head of the Gulf of Siam, collecting shell-fish, when he saw what he thought was a log drifting towards him, but it proved to be a huge crocodile. It attacked him fiercely, biting off his hand so that it hung only by the tendons of the wrist. Mortification set in and would have ended in death if he had not sought the missionary physician in Bangkok. The arm was amputated and the wound healed nicely, so that at the end of a month he left the mission hospital to return to his home in a distant town.

14. *Q.* Was this Chinaman heard of afterwards?

Yes; his gratitude and trust in those whose kindness and care had saved his life led him to say that their God should be his God. He gave up the worship of idols, refused to work on the Sabbath, and soon became a Christian and united with the church.

15. *Q.* What did he do for his countrymen?

He invited the missionaries to make his house a preaching place, and there were scores of Chinese converts in that town. He lived many years after, and died trusting in Christ.

16. *Q.* Describe the Siamese.

They are brown or copper-colored, with coarse, black and straight hair. They blacken their teeth and keep the hair closely shaven, all but a round

tuft, about four inches in diameter, on the top and front of the head. This they allow to grow, in childhood, and it is done up in a pretty knot and fastened with a fancy pin; but after they become of age, it is kept about an inch long and is combed straight up, and looks like a round shoe-brush, turned upside down.

17. *Q.* What is their character?

They are pleasing in their address, fond of music and flowers, kind to their children, respectful to parents and teachers and to the aged, but lazy, careless, and given to flattery and deceit.

18. *Q.* What is their salutation on meeting anyone?

"*Pi-ni-mah? Pi-ni?*" "Where have you been?" or "Where are you going?"

19. *Q.* How do they dress?

They wear a piece of calico, three yards long and a yard wide, around the middle of the body. The ends are fastened in front, rolled together, passed between the limbs and tucked in at the waist behind, leaving the limbs bare below the knee. The common people wear neither shoes nor stockings nor covering for the head. They used to wear nothing above the waist, except that the unmarried women wore a gay shoulder-cloth put on so as to cover the breast, but now a neat-fitting jacket or sacque, made of bleached muslin or light calico, is almost always worn by both men and women.

20. *Q.* Describe the houses of the Siamese.

In Bangkok, for five miles or more along each

bank of the river, there is a line of double-roofed *boat houses*, peculiar to this city. They are of wood, and one-storied, with a veranda in front, and placed on rafts of bamboo that rise and fall with the tide. These rafts are made fast by rings of rattan, loose enough to move up and down on posts which are planted in the bed of the river. Thousands of the people live in such houses.

21. *Q.* Are there no houses on land?

Yes; behind these floating houses, among the trees, stand the light and airy bamboo huts of the Siamese.

22. *Q.* How are these houses on land built?

On posts, six or eight feet above the ground, and reached by a rude ladder. Their sharp, high roofs are covered with a pretty-looking thatch. Among these houses, here and there, may be seen the tiled roof and solid brick walls of some rich Chinaman's dwelling or some prince's palace.

23. *Q.* Why are these houses built on posts?

The better to escape the poisonous reptiles and troublesome ants, with which the country abounds, and also because the river often overflows its banks, and houses built upon the ground would be damp and unhealthy.

24. *Q.* What is the condition of the Siamese women?

They have far more privileges than their sisters in India or China, but they are ignorant and superstitious. In trading and in managing their households they sometimes show intelligence and

ability, yet their habits are untidy and their minds chiefly taken up with trifles.

25. *Q.* Were they not educated at all when the first missionaries went there?

No. It was thought that they could cook the rice and take care of the children without knowing books, and so not one woman in a hundred could read.

26. *Q.* Are the women fond of jewelry?

They are. They wear ear-rings, finger-rings and necklaces. If they can afford it, their children wear anklets, a half dozen or more bracelets on each wrist, and as many gold chains around their necks. The children of princes and nobles wear hundreds of dollars' worth of these ornaments, and this is sometimes their only dress till they are five or six years old.

27. *Q.* Is gambling common?

Men, women and children gamble from morning till night. Men will sell their wives and children and even themselves into slavery to raise money for gambling.

28. *Q.* Mention an instance.

A little girl, only seven years old, was sold by her wicked mother for a gambling debt of twenty-four dollars. Her father redeemed her and gave her to one of the missionary ladies, with whom she lived till she had a home of her own.

29. *Q.* Do the Siamese have more than one wife?

Among the higher classes all men do. The late king had one hundred and twenty wives and

eighty or more children. It is not known how many wives the present king has, but princes and nobles have five, ten, fifteen and even twenty or more. There is much unhappiness in the homes. Quarrels are frequent, and divorces are easily obtained.

30. *Q.* What are their funeral customs?

They wear white for mourning and they always *burn* their dead unless the death was sudden, as by lightning, cholera, &c. In such cases the person is buried for about three months, not being thought to have had merit enough to be burned at once. On funeral occasions the priests are called in to chant prayers, the rich give large presents to them, and there are feasts, fireworks, &c.

31. *Q.* What is there peculiar in the Siamese language?

The words are of one syllable, and the same word spoken in five different tones may mean five different things. Their alphabet has forty-four letters besides the vowels. They read from left to right, as we do.

32. *Q.* What is the religion of Siam?

The religion is Buddhism. This religion was brought from India to Siam about the fifth century after Christ.

33. *Q.* Who was *Buddha?*

Buddha was the son of a king in India. He lived about the time of the Prophet Daniel, and died at the age of eighty. Disgusted with the pleasures and luxuries of the palace, he became a hermit, and for six years gave himself up to med-

itation and fasting. Then for forty-five years he taught the new religion which he had studied out during his retirement.

34. *Q.* What does Buddhism teach?

Buddhism teaches that the world and all things in it came into being without a creator; that the soul at death passes into the body of some new-born human being or some animal, it may be a bird or a snake, an insect, an elephant or a buffalo, according to the amount of merit made while living; that it may be thus born thousands of times; that the thing most to be desired is to make so much merit that the soul will at last go where Buddha has himself gone, into "Nepon," which is a kind of eternal sleep.

35. *Q.* What are some of the ways by which they try to make merit for themselves?

By feeding the priests, or by becoming priests themselves, by helping to build temples, by making, gilding, or worshipping idols, by giving alms to the poor.

36. *Q.* Are there many idols in Siam?

The land is full of idols. They are everywhere, in the homes, in the temples, on the hill-tops and in the caves. There is one temple where there are more than fourteen thousand idols, large and small. The people burn incense before them and make offerings of fruit and flowers.

37. *Q.* Describe their idols.

They are images of their dead god Buddha, and are made of gold, silver, brass, ivory, wood and stone, the largest ones sometimes of brick and

mortar. Some of them are not a finger long; others are too large to be placed in our largest churches.

38. *Q.* What of their temples?

The temples are very high, and some of them are very beautiful; the grounds around them are prettily laid out with shade trees, flowering plants, and well-paved walks. There are at least two hundred of them in the city of Bangkok.

39. *Q.* What of their priests?

There are some ten thousand yellow-robed, indolent Buddhist priests in the city of Bangkok, and many times that number in the kingdom, supported at an annual cost of millions of dollars.

40. *Q.* What is the government of Siam?

The government is an absolute monarchy, the king having control of the life and property of his millions of subjects.

41. *Q.* In what respect has it differed from that of any other country on earth?

Siam always had two kings until 1885, when the late second king having died, the office was abolished. This second king had his palace, his courtiers and his soldiers, but he had no power, and had the first king died, he would not have succeeded him unless chosen by the grandees.

42. *Q.* Who was the first to open Siam to commerce and western civilization?

The late king, Pra Chaumklow, father of the present king, who gained his liberal ideas chiefly from the American missionaries. Indeed, when a prince, he put himself for a year or two under the

almost daily instruction, in English and science, of Rev. J. Caswell, of the A. B. C. F. M. He became king in 1851, and reigned seventeen years.

43. *Q.* What is the age of the present king?

He was thirty-seven years old the 21st of September, 1890, and he came to the throne at the age of fifteen. He is the first Siamese king that ever left the kingdom, and he returned from his travels in British India and Java with greatly enlightened views. He has devised and carried out plans for the benefit of his people, so that now great progress is to be seen.

44. *Q.* Does he show any interest in the Christian religion?

No; though intelligent and progressive, he seems to feel bound, as the head of the nation, to maintain all the rites of Buddhism, the State religion. He has, however, granted an edict of toleration to the *Laos*, of which his Siamese subjects may also avail themselves.

45. *Q.* What is his name?

Somdet Prabart, Prah paramender Mahar Chulalongkaun, Baudintaratape, Mahar Monkoot, Rartenah rarchawe wongse, Rachar nekaradome-Chatarantah Baromah Mahar, Chakrapart, Prah Chula Chaumklow, Chow yu huah, etc.

46. *Q.* What was the name of the late second king?

His father being a great admirer of George Washington, of whom he had heard from the missionaries, gave his name to his son, so they once

had a George Washington on one of the thrones in Siam.

47. *Q.* What degrading custom did the first king abolish in 1873?

The Siamese had till then always been required to get down on elbows and knees in the presence of majesty or of a superior. Many of the princes and nobles had hard lumps as large as a hickory nut on elbows and knees, made by these frequent kneelings. The day the king was crowned he forbade all this, and ordered his courtiers, some four or five hundred in number, to rise and hereafter to stand in his presence.

48. *Q.* What act of benevolence marked his reign in 1883?

He gave four thousand eight hundred dollars for the relief of the sufferers from the earthquake in Java, and his queen gave two thousand four hundred dollars. This is the first time that Siam ever aided people of another nation.

49. *Q.* What change has he made in the dress of his courtiers?

They are now obliged to wear the whole European dress, except that they retain the waist-cloth. They must wear shoes and stockings and hats or caps, and their wives and daughters must wear shoes and stockings.

50. *Q.* What are some or the results of these changes in dress?

In one year sixteen thousand dollars' worth of hats and caps and eighteen thousand dollars' worth of shoes were imported into Bangkok.

51. *Q.* Name some other changes under the present king.

He has beautified his capital with public gardens, and new and well-built streets, and many of the princes and nobles have fine houses, handsomely furnished. A royal museum has been established, and there is also an elegant building for the royal mint. In 1883 Siam first had lines of telegraph to connect it with the rest of the world, and since then it has become a member of the Universal Postal Union. The telephone has also been introduced, the royal palace is lighted by electricity, steam ferry boats are found on the river, and horse-cars on the streets. Hospital buildings have been erected, and there is a home for orphans, and even a lunatic asylum. There is also a noble edifice, the King's College, where 200 students are instructed in the English language and western science.

MISSIONS.

52. *Q.* When did the Presbyterian Board first send missionaries to Siam?

In 1840 Rev. Wm. P. Buel and wife went out, but failing health compelled them to return in about three and a half years.

53. *Q.* Before this, what other Boards had missionaries in Siam?

The Baptist Board as early as 1833, and the A. B. C. F. M. in 1834; but the former gave up its mission to the Siamese in 1870, and has since

labored only among the Chinese. The A. B. C. F. M. withdrew from the field in 1849.

54. *Q.* When was the present Presbyterian mission begun there?

In 1847. Rev. Stephen Mattoon and wife and S. R. House, M. D., were the first missionaries.

55. *Q.* How many years before they baptized the first Siamese convert?

Twelve years; then a man who had been for several years a priest became convinced of the folly of idolatry, broke the neck of his idol, and professed his belief in the religion of Christ. Eighteen years after, he died with a bright hope of heaven, leaving a Christian wife and baptized children.

LAOS.

56. *Q.* Who are the Laos, among whom our church has missions?

The Laos are a hardy and industrious race, who inhabit five or six small kingdoms north of Siam, and are tributary to it. They number between one and two millions.

57. *Q.* How often do they pay tribute, and what is it generally?

Each Laos king must visit the Siamese capital once in three years, bringing with him a gold and a silver tree, gold necklaces and finger rings, richly decked with precious stones.

58. *Q.* Describe these trees.

They are seven or eight feet high and very

beautiful, the leaves and flowers being made of pure gold and silver delicately wrought. The whole tree looks as if made of these solid metals, and they are valued at six or seven hundred dollars.

59. *Q.* What is the distance from Bangkok to our mission station at Chieng Mai, and what time is required for the journey?

The distance is 500 miles, and the journey requires from two to three months.

60. *Q.* How do the missionaries go to Chieng Mai?

In boats, and as there are thirty-two rapids to be passed in going up the river, the boats often have to be emptied of their cargo and hauled up the rapids by ropes, and this alone occupies two weeks or more.

61. *Q.* What of Lakawn, our second mission station among the Laos?

Lakawn is a walled town of 15,000 inhabitants, 75 miles south-east of Chieng Mai.

62. *Q.* When was it first occupied?

Rev. S. C. Peoples, M. D., and wife went there in 1885.

63. *Q.* Of what and how are the Laos houses built?

They are built of teak wood or bamboo, roofed with tiles, or thatched with grass, and are raised on poles several feet high. Bricks are used for Buddhist temples, and, therefore, are held too

sacred for human dwellings. There are no floating houses as in Siam.

64. *Q.* What singular custom is universal among the Laos?

The men tattoo their bodies from the waist to below the knee, with figures of monkeys, bats, birds, etc.

65. *Q.* How do they dress?

The men dress very much like the Siamese. The dress of the women is a straight, scant, striped skirt, with a showy strip, embroidered with gold, silver, and silk thread, inserted into it near the bottom. They wear either a tight-fitting white jacket, or a bright colored cotton or silk scarf, tied around the chest just under the arms.

66. *Q.* How do the women arrange their hair?

Their long, shining, black hair is combed straight back and looped into a pretty knot. If unmarried, they wear a flower in their hair, and for a yonng man to ask for this flower would mean an offer of his heart and hand.

67. *Q.* How do they busy themselves?

They do much of the hard work in the field as well as in the house. They all of them, rich and poor, spend much time making robes for the priests. They also spin and weave nearly all the cotton cloth used for their own garments.

68. *Q.* What is the religion of the Laos?

They not only worship Buddha, but they worship evil spirits also, and they believe in witch-

craft, believing it to cause many of their diseases. This leads to much cruelty and oppression.

69. *Q.* What kind of Christians do they make?

A missionary writes: "A large proportion of these converted pagans can not only lead a prayer meeting and take an edifying part in the services, but they have a deep sense of what salvation is, and what a lack of it means to their friends and neighbors. Both men and women do a vast amount of Christian work, instructing and persuading others."

70. *Q.* When and where was a mission commenced among the *Laos*, and by whom?

In 1867, at Chieng Mai. Rev. D. McGilvary and wife were the first to go, and they were followed in 1868 by Rev. J. Wilson and wife.

MISSION WORK.

71. *Q.* How many mission *stations* are there in *Siam* and *Laos* now (1890)?

There are three principal stations in Siam, one in Bangkok, one in Petchaburee, and one in Ratburee, besides several out-stations. There are two principal stations in Laos, one at Chieng Mai, and one at Lakawn, and twelve out-stations.

72. *Q.* How many missionaries are there now in these two fields?

There are in Siam nine ordained missionaries, four medical missionaries, ten married and five single ladies.

In Laos, eight ordained missionaries, one of them a physician, and two other physicians not ordained, eight married and four single ladies.

73. *Q.* How many Churches?

Seven in Siam, with 392 communicants. Five in Laos, with 852 communicants.

74. *Q.* How many mission schools?

Siam has seventeen mission schools, with 412 pupils. Laos has four schools, with 229 pupils. It has also a promising Theological Training Class of twenty-one men.

75. *Q.* What were the only schools in these countries when the missionaries first went to them?

The *wats* or temples. The boys are taught in them to read and write their own language. They also learn the simple rules of arithmetic, and something of their religion. In return for this they serve the priests.

76. *Q.* What of the girls' boarding and day school in Bangkok?

It was commenced in 1874 and was the first school of the kind in the kingdom. Under the faithful care of Miss Edna Cole it has now forty-eight pupils, among them a little princess, entered for three years, and several children from noble families. The pupils gave nearly $500 last year towards their new dining-room and kitchen, the proceeds of a bazaar held in the Royal Garden, and the income from the work of the sewing department for the year.

77. *Q.* What change has been made in the

boys' school that has been carried on here since 1852?

The *boarding* department has been transferred to the Christian High School, opened by Rev. J. A. Eakin, January, 1890, designed to be a place of training for workers in the church. The original boys' school now numbers fifty-five day scholars.

78. *Q.* What has been done for education in and near Petchaburee?

Miss Cort has organized twelve day schools, with 232 pupils enrolled. The last year she has had a training class for teachers and Bible readers. Twelve married women were enrolled.

There is also the Howard Industrial School of thirty-seven girls, and a boys' boarding school of twenty-eight boys.

79. *Q.* What of the girls' school at Chieng Mai?

It was removed to a new school building in 1888, and the number of boarding pupils nearly doubled at once. There are now ninety-one pupils. They have been classified anew and a new course of study marked out. Nineteen of the girls have been received into the church.

80. *Q.* What of the boys' school?

Rev. D. G. Collins opened a shool for boys March, 1888, in a new school building. It began with sixty scholars, most of them sons of Christian families. It has now ninety-four pupils, forty of whom are boarders. Eleven have been received into the church.

81. *Q.* What is there interesting about their school building?

By the aid of the steam saw-mill and the energy of the missionaries a suitable and substantial building was made ready in the short period of nine weeks, at a total cost of less than $900.

82. *Q.* Do the missionaries in Siam consider *touring* an important part of their work?

They do, and in the dry season they often go out for weeks at a time in their boats, through the canals and rivers, which are the highways of the country, taking with them hundreds of books and tracts. Stopping at the numerous villages on the banks, they visit the people in their houses and the priests in their temples, giving away or selling their books, preaching and giving instruction to all who will listen.

83. *Q.* What of medical work in Bangkok?

One missionary physician, T. H. Hays, M.D., has recently been appointed General Director of the Government hospitals, dispensary, and other work in the same line, and has charge also of the old Bangkok hospital. Government does not forbid his teaching Christianity, and has authorized him to secure a medical missionary to join him.

84. *Q.* What does Dr. Hays receive for all this?

Only the ordinary salary of a medical missionary, and he gives into the mission treasury all that he receives yearly from the Government.

85. *Q.* What other medical work is being done in Siam?

There is a hospital at Petchaburee, and thousands of patients receive treatment every year. At Ratburee Dr. Thompson has a room fitted up for a dispensary and another for patients, and the beginning of medical work at this new station is promising.

86. *Q.* What of medical work among the Laos?

The temporary hospital at Chieng Mai is still doing good service, but it is expected it will soon give place to the fine new one, the finishing of which has been so long delayed.

There is no hospital at the new station at Lakawn, but the Governor has given a fine location for one, on which a convenient dispensary has been built and a small chapel is under way. Small bamboo huts have thus far been made to serve instead of hospital wards.

87. *Q.* What are some things which American missionaries in Siam aad Laos have done?

They have introduced vaccination, by which multitudes of lives have been saved; many thousands have received medical treatment from them; they have established schools for girls and boys where hundreds of children have been taught the sciences and the Christian religion; the printing press has been introduced, and school books have been made and printed in the Siamese language; also Christian books and tracts, which have been distributed by thousands; the Bible has been

translated, and the Gospel faithfully preached; Sabbath schools have been organized, and, best of all, more than twelve hundred converts from heathenism have been baptized and received into the churches.

88. *Q.* What should the Presbyterian church ever bear in mind?

That it is to her alone that God has committed the giving of the Gospel to the Siamese and Laos, and that the missionaries and their message are everywhere welcomed and listened to with respect and attention; therefore it may be her blessed privilege, if faithful to her trust, soon to win these lands to Christ.